

**October 2016** • Socialist Workers Party pre-conference

# BULLETIN 1

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**This bulletin is for members of the SWP only. It should not be distributed or forwarded to others**

## **GUIDE TO SWP NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

### **6-8 JANUARY, LONDON**

WELCOME TO pre-conference bulletin 1. Please read the contributions, take part in the discussion and, if you want, contribute to one of the forthcoming pre-conference bulletins. We want our conference to be a democratic event in which comrades can fully participate.

Whether you have joined recently or been a member for years, you should feel able to join the debates and put forward your views.

Branches should make arrangements to enable all members to be part of the conference discussion, and to make it possible for any member to put themselves forward as a delegate.

The SWP annual conference will take place on Friday 6, Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 January in London. Registration starts at 5pm on Friday 6 January. The conference finishes at 4.30pm on Sunday 8 January.

The pre-conference discussion period, according to the party's constitution, begins three months before that. It therefore started on 6 October.

### **Pre-conference bulletins**

The main method of discussion is through the pre-conference bulletins (PCBs) where comrades can send in their views, their experiences, their proposals and their ideas. These bulletins are for members only and should not be shared outside the party.

#### **Deadlines**

Any SWP member may write for the PCBs. The timetable for the PCBs will be:

**PCB2 deadline 5pm Monday 31 October**

**PCB3 deadline 5pm Monday 5 December**

Please keep contributions for the PCBs as short as possible (see word limits below) and send them to [conference@swp.org.uk](mailto:conference@swp.org.uk). Comrades who send a contribution will receive an acknowledgement from the National Office within three working days. If the National Office has not acknowledged your contribution please contact us as soon as possible.

#### **Word limits**

The following word limits apply:

- In PCB1 comrades may have their names attached to pieces with a total word count of up to 4,000 words. This includes any pieces with multiple signatories.
- The main CC contribution in PCB1, which sets out proposals for the general perspective of the party, may be up to 6,000 words. Other contributions by the CC are limited to 4,000 words.
- In PCB2 and PCB3 comrades may have their names attached to pieces with a total word count of up to 3,000 words. This includes any pieces with multiple signatories.
- CC contributions in PCB2 and PCB3 may be up to 4,000 words.

- The national secretaries may make minor modifications to contributions, request that they be rewritten in part or in their entirety, or refuse publication where they are libellous, endanger the safety or future employment of comrades, or contain information likely to lead to legal problems for the party or its members.
- The national secretaries may reject contributions that have appeared or are due to appear elsewhere, whether in print publications or online.

### **Pre-conference district meetings ("aggregates")**

These meetings, open to all SWP members from the district, are where delegates to SWP Conference are elected. They are also a chance for every member to discuss our perspectives. The meeting dates will be circulated in Party Notes. In addition each registered member will receive notification of their meeting.

As in previous years, the only members who can be elected as delegates and take part in voting in aggregates are those who joined before Monday 30 October, the closing date for IB2. Anyone who joins after that is welcome to attend the aggregates, speak etc, but they can't vote or be a delegate.

### **Conference procedures**

The main method of discussion at conference is through what we call commissions. These are documents drawn up at the end of conference sessions which summarise the main strands of discussion and any action to be taken. These can be amended. And if there is more than one view in the discussion then there can be alternative commissions which are then voted on.

This method is democratic, transparent, flexible and open to the input of delegates. It means that the very latest developments and the insights and arguments that appear in the debate can be reflected in the party's decisions.

Commissions allow delegates to listen to the experiences from the rest of the party, consider the arguments put forwards and then make decisions. However it is not a method that people are used to for trade union or student union conferences. We will make sure it is fully and repeatedly explained at the conference.

We also want districts to hold meetings after delegates are elected to introduce them to the way conference works and to deal with any questions in an unhurried atmosphere.

Sometimes there's a need for more specific debates. These can usually take the form of commissions or amendments to commissions. But they may also take the form of motions.

#### **The procedure for motions to conference is:**

- All motions must be passed in time for them to appear in one of the Pre-Conference Bulletins so that everyone is aware of them in advance. That means the final date for the submission of motions is the closing date for PCB3 - 5pm, Monday 5 December.

- They must be passed by at least one properly-organised meeting of an SWP branch, or fraction, or district, or aggregate or the NC or the CC.
- Motions must be circulated well in advance (at least seven days) to allow comrades time to consider them.
- Motions to conference cannot be discussed outside the pre-conference period.
- All amendments to motions must be in by 9am on Friday 16 December. They must go through the same process as for motions - passed by a properly organised meeting and with sufficient notice given.
- All motions and amendments should be sent to [conference@swp.org.uk](mailto:conference@swp.org.uk) Comrades who send a motion or amendment will receive an acknowledgement from the National Office within three working days. If the National Office has not acknowledged your contribution please contact us as soon as possible.

## National Committee (NC)

Every year at SWP annual conference delegates elect a National Committee of 50 members. The party's constitution says, "The National Committee assists the Central Committee in providing political leadership for the party and reviews the party's political and organisational work between conferences. Its decisions are binding on the Central Committee. In the event of a major disagreement between the Central Committee and the National Committee, the NC has the right to call a special conference. The NC normally meets every two months between annual conferences."

Those elected to the NC also attend party councils and party conference by right. We call for nominations for the NC in pre-conference bulletins 1 and 2.

**All nominations must be received by 5pm on Monday 5 December** (the deadline for pre-conference bulletin 3). Please do not wait to the last minute to do this.

A full list of nominations will be published in advance of conference. This will give delegates time to decide who they wish to elect. We will circulate a nomination form with pre-conference bulletins 1 and 2. If you wish to stand, please fill it in and return it to the National Office or email the required information to [conference@swp.org.uk](mailto:conference@swp.org.uk)

Each nomination has to be supported by five comrades, and the nominee has to agree to be nominated. Candidates have to be registered members of the SWP and up to date with their subs (this also applies to the comrades nominating the candidate).

Each candidate should submit up to 50 words explaining why they should be on the NC. Please do not submit more than 50 words (last year the longest one submitted was 98 words – it had to be cut).

## Central Committee (CC)

The CC consists of members elected by the conference according to the following procedure:

The outgoing Central Committee selects and circulates a provisional slate for the new CC at the beginning of the period for pre-conference discussion. This is then discussed at the district aggregates where comrades can propose alternative slates.

At the conference the outgoing CC proposes a final slate (which may have changed as a result of the pre-conference discussion). This slate, along with any other that is supported by a minimum of five delegates, is discussed and voted on by conference.

Between conferences the CC is entrusted with the political leadership of the organisation and is responsible for the national direction of all political and organisational work, subject to the decision-making powers of Conference.

## Childcare

The question of childcare is an important one for all comrades, but particularly for women. Given we live in a society where the ruling ideas say that women are expected to bear the main burden of looking after children, it is women who are hit hardest when there is no consideration of this issue.

It is very difficult to provide a full crèche on the Marxism 2016 model for conference. At Marxism we use a combination of the (legally required) trained childcare workers and volunteers. It's hugely expensive but we do it because we recognise that it's necessary.

The cost is simply too high for us to provide that level of crèche for every party event. But depending on the age/situation of the child involved, the delegate's district could make provision to help, or a comrade could bring a friend to look after the child and be provided with a room at the event and some assistance, or the child could stay with someone else in London.

None of this is ideal, but it's possible to sort out such issues. They have worked at recent conferences.

## Access

The conference venue is fully accessible. If there are any other needs that delegates require, please contact the National Office and we will seek to help.

*All pre-conference discussion should take place through the PCBs, the aggregates and the party's democratic structures, and not by any other means.*

*If you have any questions about conference, please contact the National Office on 020 7840 5600*

**Amy Leather and Charlie Kimber,**  
SWP joint national secretaries

# JEREMY CORBYN, ANTI-RACISM AND THE STRUGGLE TODAY

Central Committee

British politics is changing in a way we haven't seen for decades. The factors that have swept across other parts of Europe and the world have arrived, in distinctive fashion, here as well.

David Cameron has been ejected, the Labour Party is led by a left wing socialist, UKIP's leadership has imploded and Britain has voted to leave the European Union.

This is a time of tumult. Over the next 12 months, we could see further lurches down in the world economy, a defeat of Italy's government in a referendum over constitutional reforms, and a right wing anti-immigration party becoming Germany's largest opposition party.

But there could also be a strengthening of anti-racist movements across Europe and the emergence of new left challenges to the status quo.

The convulsions inside the Labour Party accompanying the dramatic rise of Jeremy Corbyn from the obscurity of the backbenches to the leadership, the renewed and expanded mandate he has obtained after the attempt by the Labour Right to drive him from office, the huge growth of Labour's membership and the creation of a mass left around Corbyn and Labour have all rightly been at the centre of socialists' attention.

The mood of bitterness inside British society, built up by decades of neoliberalism and accelerated by the great economic crisis of 2007-8 and ensuing austerity, turned the EU vote into a referendum on the establishment and the status quo for millions of people.

The terms of Brexit – in which vital interests of British capitalism are at stake – is likely to be a source of deep tensions and instability inside Theresa May's cabinet.

Moreover, this will have to be conducted against the backdrop of world economy that is once again showing signs of weakness and potential crisis.

None of this is translating into a great rise of strikes and working class struggle – which remains at very low levels, though of course the potential for workplace struggle has not gone away – but it has fed into the renewal of the left.

Remarkably, in the two countries that among the advanced industrial economies were in the vanguard of neoliberalism – Britain and the United States – figures identifying with socialism have been able to enter mainstream politics and command huge audiences.

In the US, Bernie Sanders not only articulated a bitter rage against Wall Street and the rule of the 1 percent, he called himself

a “democratic socialist” as he addressed up to a million people in total at his rallies.

However vague, this is a significant advance in a country where the left has faced isolation for decades – even if Sanders eventually sold the pass by backing Clinton, a reliable political instrument of the 1 percent.

And in Britain, the socialist left is renewing itself around Corbyn and the Labour Party. This presents major opportunities and important challenges. How the SWP relates to this is the crucial test we face over the coming period.

## The era of Corbyn

The unresolved contradictions inside the Labour Party once again exploded over the summer.

The hubris and sense of entitlement of the Labour Right saw them move to depose Corbyn just nine months after he was elected as Labour leader. First came the attempted ‘coup’ as mass shadow cabinet resignations, timed for the media, and a vote of no confidence in the Parliamentary Labour party (PLP) aimed to force Corbyn out.

When Corbyn failed to buckle, the right was reluctantly compelled to stand a candidate against him, alighting on the hapless Owen Smith.

This turned out to be a major miscalculation for the Labour Right. The result was a renewed surge into the Labour Party, with another 100,000 joining in a fortnight, followed by a series of mass rallies on a scale even greater than during the 2015 leadership election – for example, 3,000 in Hull, 2,000 in Leeds and up to 10,000 in Liverpool, but also remarkably in places like Milton Keynes (1,500) and Redruth in Cornwall (1,000).

And despite the bureaucratic manoeuvres by the Labour right and its allies inside the party's apparatus that saw huge numbers of Labour members and supporters disenfranchised and the endless slander and attacks directed at Corbyn and his supporters in the media, the outcome was a decisive victory for Corbyn that leaves him stronger.

Corbyn won over 313,000 votes compared to 251,000 in 2015, with a higher percentage than previously and winning comfortably in each of the three voting categories (members, supporters and affiliates). The Labour Right have suffered a serious defeat.

In Scotland the Corbyn effect is much less marked. Corbyn's opposition to Scottish independence cuts him off from a big swathe of radicals. Tens of thousands of people who might have joined Labour instead were drawn into the SNP. In addition the Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale is anti-Corbyn.

However, even in Scotland there is at least some recruitment to Labour and large rallies when Corbyn visits.

The SNP continues to be dominant polit-

ically, but shies away from the thought of a swift second independence referendum.

Meanwhile SNP councils and the Scottish government implement with hardly a whimper the cuts demanded by the Tories. This leaves space for socialist ideas to find an audience.

## What next?

The Labour right are not about to give up – either by splitting away from Labour or reconciling themselves finally to Corbyn's leadership in the name of unity.

Instead they will continue to use their base in the PLP and party apparatus, the cadre of activists they still have in the CLPs (especially among Labour councillors, today a key base of the right unlike the 1980s when the left often dominated local government) and the backing of the media to seek to undermine Corbyn.

So at Labour's conference they staged something of a fightback.

They were able to push through the creation of two extra seats on the NEC, Labour's ruling body, which will be in the gift of the anti-Corbyn leaders of the Welsh and Scottish Labour parties, thus strengthening the influence of the right over the party's machinery.

And Tom Watson, Labour's deputy leader, launched a political attack on the left, defending Blair and Brown records in office and declaring, “Capitalism, comrades, is not the enemy. Money's not the problem. Business isn't bad. The real world is more complicated than that, as any practical trade unionist will tell you.”

The Labour right will continue attempt to pressurise Corbyn and the left both with open attacks and with attempts to force policy retreats. Two fault lines in particular stand out:

The first is around foreign policy and especially military commitments.

The speech by the then shadow defence secretary Clive Lewis, a Corbyn supporter, marked a major retreat. Lewis said Labour's policy is to back the renewal of Trident nuclear missiles, praised Nato for embodying the values of “collectivism, internationalism and the strong defending the weak” and committed Labour to spending 2 percent of GDP on defence.

This reflects in part the pressure of both the (anti-Corbyn) GMB leadership and the (pro-Corbyn) Unite leadership, which both back Trident renewal. But it also reflects the pressure of the Right and the kind of electoral logic that says Labour cannot risk being seen as “soft of defence”.

Such concessions are both wrong on principle but also tactically – they will not prevent attacks from the Labour Right, the Tories or the media and risk demoralising Corbyn's supporters if he doesn't challenge such positions.

The second fault line is over immigration and the free movement of labour. A swathe of the Labour right, typified by the



disgusting Rachel Reeves, is ratcheting up calls for Labour to back curbs on the free movement of labour. Corbyn is resisting this pressure – for example, his speech at Labour conference challenged the scapegoating of migrants and put forward some basic class arguments, all too rarely heard in the mainstream, pointing to the Tories as to blame for the crisis in the NHS or housing, not migrants.

But some of Corbyn's allies are much weaker on immigration. So Angela Rayner, who has been very effective in taking on the Tories over education, told the BBC that there must be "controls" on immigration to address people's concerns about "unvetted" immigration.

All of this underlines the necessity of building a mass anti-racist movement, as Stand Up to Racism is attempting to do, that can act as a counterweight to such arguments.

Corbyn and the new Labour left will face contradictory pressures – both putting forward strong left wing arguments but also at points looking to conciliate the Right.

So for example, Jon Lansman, a key figure in Momentum, has rejected calls for a challenge to Tom Watson as deputy leader.

In this situation we will continue to seek points of contact and points of unity with Corbyn supporters.

We will relentlessly try to build united front work and at the same time offer political clarity.

We are always on Corbyn's side against the right, but we insist that translating the mood around Corbyn into increased struggle on the streets and in the workplaces will have the decisive bearing on the outcome of that battle.

Any retreats by Corbyn will make that task harder.

But crucially, there is a huge new audience for socialist ideas – the SWP has to constantly seek to find ways to connect with this audience.

Of course, this means finding out about key local CLPs meetings – and developing contacts and a sense of what's happening inside the local Labour Party – and selling Socialist Worker outside, taking part in Momentum events where possible and so on.

But Corbyn's supporters go much wider than those inside Labour. They are to be found around housing or education campaigns, around solidarity with strikes or anti-fracking campaigns, in every workplace and university. But the arena where we are likely to come into the greatest contact with Corbyn supporters is around anti-racist work through Stand Up to Racism.

The emergence of a mass socialist left around Corbyn and Labour is a seismic event that is shaking British politics. It is also re-establishing socialism as a point of political and ideological reference.

The SWP can offer political clarity

about how real change can come about, where real power lies in society, and the record of previous attempts to win socialism through the existing institutions of society. We will not pass over the historical record of reformism and previous Labour governments or the present experience of Syriza and Francois Hollande. We continue to build an independent revolutionary organisation.

But our political clarity is only relevant if it raised within the context of finding an audience and engaging in joint activity with Corbyn supporters.

## The Tories' problems

David Cameron has gone, and he has not, as feared, been replaced by Boris Johnson. George Osborne, and his plans for achieving a budget surplus by 2020, have bitten the dust.

The brief moment when Theresa May was seen as bringing an era of unity and calm to the Tories is coming to an end. A new face at Number 10 has not eliminated the problems of what Brexit will look like, how to deal with the budget deficit and a very slim working majority in the Commons.

Behind all this lies the central problem for ruling classes across the world: economic stagnation. More than eight years after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, there is no confidence in ruling circles that the global economy is going to return to pre-crisis conditions.

The fears about the possible downfall of Deutsche Bank, and the actual failure of Hanjin shipping which left more than 100 ships and their cargo in limbo at sea, are a sign of the fragility and weakness of the global economy.

A Telegraph newspaper columnist wrote recently, "The third leg of the world's intractable depression is yet to come. If trade economists at the United Nations are right, the next traumatic episode may entail the greatest debt jubilee in history. It may also prove to be the definitive crisis of globalised capitalism, the demise of the liberal free-market orthodoxies promoted for almost 40 years by the Bretton Woods institutions, the OECD, and the Davos fraternity."

The G20 meeting in September was dominated by recognition of continuing economic sluggishness—or worse—and fear of rising resistance to political and economic elites.

The International Monetary Fund has reduced its estimates for growth in the leading economies. It said they would grow by 1.6 percent this year, compared to 2.1 percent last year.

The Chinese economy is growing at its slowest rate in a quarter century while Brazil and Russia are both in their second year of recession.

When the new Tory chancellor Philip Hammond present his Autumn Statement

he is not going to reverse all the austerity policies. He will signal continued attacks on workers' living standards and key public services. The intensified crisis of the NHS will be more and more obvious.

But May's biggest and most intractable political problem is Brexit.

On 23 September the Financial Times reported, "Mrs May is still trying to work out the government's negotiating position and to get any sense from fellow EU leaders of their own bottom lines."

When asked last month who was in charge of Brexit, Philip Hammond, the chancellor, told a businessman it is "all very difficult at the moment".

May has slapped down both Brexit secretary David Davis and foreign secretary Boris Johnson when they put forward their own views about Brexit.

Just before the Tory conference, May announced that she would invoke Article 50 before April next year. This is what would begin two years of negotiations that will lead to a formal exit from the EU.

The Tories' problem is that as soon as the negotiations start they will disappoint one or other crucial source of their support. Most sections of big business want full access to the EU's single market. This makes it easier for them to move capital around and compete against rivals. It's particularly important to the bankers.

But to secure this will very likely require agreeing some version of freedom of movement for workers.

May's choice is either to upset business or to upset those newspapers and voters who accept racist myths about immigration.

The Tory conference marked a shift by May away from pitching to enter the single market and towards a racist agenda of curbing immigration and hounding migrants.

Instead of seeking to reverse the Leave vote, trade unions, Corbyn supporters and other socialists should fight for a left wing Brexit. We have our own analysis of the Leave vote. Although some Leave voters were motivated by racism, the central issue is that it was a revolt against the establishment. People who are generally forgotten, ignored or sneered at delivered a stunning blow against the people at the top of society. This was a rejection of the governing class.

But however people voted on 23 June, the left has to unite against racism, austerity, the Tories and the anti-Corbyn Labour MPs. We have to come together over the general issues but also the specific ones that are raised in the negotiations about Brexit.

The question of combating the Tories' racist agenda and securing full rights for EU nationals in Britain is extremely important. We also want to defend freedom of movement, and no reductions in workplace, social or equality rights.

But we should be bolder. Pressure to repeal the Trade Union Act should be part of the debate about Brexit.

We must defend the (disgracefully meagre) rights of refugees. But we should also seize the moment and demand letting in the people in the Calais “jungle” and press for open borders.

We want action on climate change and a ban on fracking. There is also another chance to press for independence for Scotland.

The TUC conference laid down some ideas for a pro-workers Brexit but the motion also had much backward-looking mourning about how awful the Leave vote was. That won't work. It will simply alienate people who can be won to a radical programme of resistance to the elite and the bosses.

The Tories face many serious problems ahead. The SWP must work to raise the level of fightback and to build the revolutionary core of the resistance.

## Stand Up To Racism— a key united front

Stand Up to Racism is the most important united front we are involved in. Of course there are other important initiatives that we will take or be involved in, such as building strike solidarity, taking up Corbyn's call to fight for inclusive education, being part of local anti-cuts groups, opposing the Housing Act, opposing fracking and building Unite the Resistance and the People's Assembly. It is important that we stay involved in local People's Assemblies.

But being part of building SUTR is a central strategic task. As outlined in more detail elsewhere in this bulletin, building SUTR as broad and wide as possible flows from the needs of the working class and the necessity of unity at a time when racism is being used to divide people.

The speeches at the Tory conference were a signal of where May would like to go, unleashing assaults on migrants, refugees and Muslims to divert and distract attention from the crimes of the rich and powerful.

During the Tory conference, Conservative MP George Freeman, who is head of the Downing Street policy board, told a fringe event there would be “anti-capitalist riots” if the government does not urgently reform the economic system. Turning people's anger against migrants is a crucial part of breaking resistance.

SUTR must take up all the fronts of racism – from defending EU nationals, to refugee solidarity to responding to the growth in racist attacks, from challenging the poison of Islamophobia to being part of the Black Lives Matter movement. In the last year SUTR has made an important contribution in all these areas.

But it is also true that anti-racist work is contested. The horror of the so called “Jungle” camp in Calais has led many people into focusing solely on charity work. The recent 20,000 strong “Solidarity for Refu-

gees” demonstration in London was backed by a very wide range of groups including charities such as Amnesty, Unicef and CAFOD, and also businesses such as Lush and Ben and Jerry's.

Such wide backing shows the scale of what is possible but because these groups were in the leadership it also meant the political message was lost. Despite being an official supporter of the demo SUTR was not able to speak at the rally and Corbyn's offer to speak was rejected by the organisers.

This was in marked contrast to a similar demonstration a year ago called by SUTR with other organisations where Corbyn made his first speech after winning the Labour leadership contest. It means that solidarity with refugees is separated off from politics, even if there are calls for the government to do more.

We need to raise the political demands to open the borders, let refugees in and put the pressure on the Tories. We need to actively campaign in schools, educational institutions and on the streets for the enactment of the Dubs Amendment to let in refugee children

We need the social weight of the trade unions to help undercut the arguments that refugees and migrants are to blame for unemployment, low pay and homelessness.

SUTR cannot just be about refugee solidarity given the scale of racist attacks and the continued racist violence of the police and other institutions. But again this is contested. In the Black Lives Matter movement ideas about white privilege and Black Nationalism are raised and argued over. It is good to discuss these ideas openly but if they dominate in a campaign they can lead to division and fragmentation rather than the wider unity required to challenge racism in society.

SUTR must be a broad social movement if it is to be capable of taking on racism on the scale required. To be part of creating this requires a big vision for SUTR and for the SWP to make a shift. The SUTR conference provides a clear model of what is possible. It brought together hundreds of activists not only to hear speakers but to plan future activities and campaigns. But the SUTR conference was not an end in itself. As speakers said, it must be the beginning of a broad movement.

Every area needs to have a permanent SUTR group capable of both taking imaginative initiatives and also responding, should the need arise, to a racist attack or other incidents in the local area. To build SUTR on the scale required in each locality requires thought to be put in to how SUTR as a united front is constructed.

SUTR includes many people to the right of the SWP. The majority of those who want to do something to help refugees probably don't think, as we do, that there should be open borders. Not all those angered by a racist attack think that we need to destroy capitalism to get rid of rac-

ism completely. Rather than starting from our politics and who agrees with us we act in unity with those who agree with the need for action against racism.

Following the conference SUTR has called for a roll out of rallies on “Confronting the rise in racism”. We argue in SUTR to invite high profile speakers. SUTR has the support of the Labour leadership. Even if MPs and councilors are not Corbyn supporters it is likely they will want to take up the issue of racism.

We should encourage SUTR groups to write to all local MPs, MEPs and councilors to ask them to support SUTR locally. The Unite and UCU unions have policy supporting SUTR, the TUC has endorsed the SUTR campaign. The NUS has policy to work with SUTR. All of these, as well as other trade union branches, should be urged to support SUTR locally. Contact Muslim organisations in your area such as MEND. Think about other organisations and charities that help refugees and invite them.

Not only is this crucial to mobilise the majority of people who do want to challenge racism in Britain but it will allow us as revolutionaries to work with Labour Party members. It allows us to act alongside those in Labour while at the same time continuing to discuss how change can come about. We can prove in practice the best methods of winning change and argue the wider politics of where racism comes from and the link to capitalism. To build SUTR on the scale required is a huge challenge and necessitates a big turn in our work and focus.

## Politics in the workplace

The defining feature of the industrial struggle is the enormous gap between the bitterness millions of working class people feel about the onslaught they face – over cuts, attacks on pay and conditions, pressure to work ever harder and the bullying that goes with it and so on – and the weakness of any fightback.

So the signs of some revival of national struggle we saw earlier in the year – with the successful Scottish lecturers' strike, the one day national strike by the NUT in early July, the strike across FE in England and strikes by university lecturers, and above all the strikes by junior doctors – have lost momentum, with the NUT leadership retreating from commitments to call more strikes this term and the BMA calling off a planned five day strike in September and then calling all three five days strikes planned through the rest of the autumn.

This is a major blow. And nor are we currently seeing the kind of protracted local strikes – such as the National Gallery last year or the National Museum of Wales earlier this year. This can change of course. But we need to be recognise there is not a significant wave of struggle taking place.

The potential exists, it is not turned into

reality. The key responsibility for this lies with the trade union leaderships. This is clearest around the junior doctors – a dispute involving a group completely new to struggle, who demonstrated a remarkable resilience even ousting a leadership that accepted a deal with Jeremy Hunt in the midst of the dispute.

It also offered the best chance to defeat the government over the NHS and to demonstrate in a high profile, very visible dispute that strikes can deliver results.

But despite the huge amount of sympathy for the junior doctors across the working class, the TUC failed to offer more than warm words.

The TUC did not call a national demonstration in support for the junior doctors and in defence of the NHS and when the PCS's Mark Serwotka raised the idea of a day of action at the TUC General Council he was rebuffed.

Locally, networks of trade unionists and health campaigners did mobilise around the picket lines but on a national scale, the junior doctors were effectively left to fight alone.

Eventually, this allowed the more conservative elements of the BMA to start to gain the upper hand.

One danger is that setbacks industrially can feed into a “wait for Corbyn” approach among even the best activists.

One section of the trade union bureaucracy is demoralised because they looked to the EU on the one hand and they despair of the electoral prospects of Labour under Corbyn. Another section is very enthusiastic about Corbyn but at least in part sees a left Labour government as an alternative to struggle.

Of course, there are disputes taking place – on Southern Rail, at London Met university, a new round of strikes among Ritzy cinema workers in London, the revolt by Deliveroo drivers, the fights by Derby and Durham teaching assistants and so on – which can become a real focus for solidarity.

The SWP has to put itself at the forefront of building solidarity with those strikes that take place – and Unite the Resistance plays an important role here. UTR has built valuable networks of solidarity and we want to build a successful conference on 12 November. Comrades should come and seek to bring activists and delegations from work.

We have to take up the argument in our unions for action and against backsliding and retreats.

But we also have to relate to any initiatives by union leaders that help boost activity and resistance – around campaigns over primary tests boycotts or funding cuts in the NUT, or over the defence of higher education in UCU.

Building Stand Up to Racism in the workplace and inside the unions can not only play a key role in blunting the racist offensive and divisions inside the working

class but can help locate new trade union activists.

Taking up political questions, and especially anti-racism, will play a key role in rebuilding in the unions and renewing the SWP in the workplace.

## Imperialism

In the last few months there have been devastating judgments on the bitter cost of British imperialism. The harshest was the Chilcot report that, despite pulling some of its punches, delivered a devastating verdict on Tony Blair and the whole era of “humanitarian intervention”. Then the Foreign Affairs Committee report on Britain's intervention into Libya said the whole operation was disastrous and that Cameron was responsible for the horrors that has followed.

The intense suffering of the Syrian people continues, bombed by all the imperialist actors and the vicious Syrian regime of Assad. We continue to oppose that regime, and condemn the British, US and Russian bombing. British drone attacks played a role in ending the most recent Syrian ceasefire.

But only a revival of the revolutionary movement from below in Syria can provide a real way out.

Some Syrian exiles have, in desperation, called for a no fly zone over areas of Syria. We oppose such demands.

Any assistance that the US or other Western powers offer to forces fighting Assad will come at the price of strengthening imperialism in the region – and we should recall that ISIS emerged, to a great extent, out of the destruction of Iraq by imperialism.

We continue to be at the centre of Stop the War and to support its initiatives. We have disagreements with some of its leaders' politics, but we recognise its continued role as the premier anti-imperialist vehicle.

We also stand strongly with the Kurdish people against the assaults on their national rights, particularly from the Turkish state.

Finally, it is a question of when rather than if the issue of Palestine will burst into central prominence again. We continue to work around BDS initiatives and to propagandise and work with others around the question.

## Building the SWP

More people than ever are talking about socialism. However the organisational conclusion can pull towards the Labour Party. How can we build a revolutionary party in the era of Corbynism? That is the challenge the SWP faces – to try to win people to revolutionary socialism and the need for an independent revolutionary party.

It is clear there is an appetite for big ideas among those joining Labour or supporting Corbyn. The World Transformed event hosted by Momentum in Liverpool

during the Labour Party conference drew hundreds of people. Sessions were packed out discussing everything from fighting racism and oppression, to the struggle for education, from campaigns against state violence to parliamentary socialism in the 21st century. Speakers who articulated a vision about a radically different sort of society went down well.

What was sometimes missing was the question of how such changes could be achieved. Obviously in Labour the strategy is to get Jeremy Corbyn elected as Prime Minister in 2020. At best this means a mix of parliamentary and extra parliamentary activity is offered – support for strikes, protests and campaigns but working for a Labour victory above all else.

We are very clear that struggle is needed on every level to both embolden Corbyn, help him to resist the pressures already being exerted, and in fact to win the changes that those looking to Corbyn want to win.

There is a danger that a focus on the 2020 election can breed passivity. We have to fight against that and be working alongside Corbynistas in a range of campaigns – whether that is against the Housing Act, building strike solidarity, against health or council cuts, against fracking or against the bombing of other countries.

Crucially we will work alongside Labour Party members and many others in the fight against racism within Stand Up To Racism as outlined above.

And of course as we work alongside others discussions will take place. Rather than just quoting a long list of sell outs from past Labour governments we need to go on a journey alongside those enthused by Corbyn. Working with them but discussing things like: What do we mean by socialism? How can it be achieved? What did the ruling class do to previous Labour Governments to make them retreat from more radical policies? What happened to Syriza in Greece? And crucially how can we match the power of the ruling class – Why do workers have potential power? What do we mean by revolution?

This takes political clarity. We should aim to sell Socialist Worker to those around us; engage them with our pamphlets and other publications. But it is not a stageist approach. We can recruit people now to the SWP. In the first week of October 17 students joined the SWP, 12 on direct debit. Some joined at SUTR meetings and the conference, others at SWSS meetings. This is something we have to continue.

Student Freshers Fairs this year have shown the size of the audience for our ideas, and we have had some good early results with hundreds leaving their details for SWSS and many copies of SW sold. SWSS groups have already held a number of large meetings on campus.

But the audience is not just among students. Nearly 400 people have joined the SWP this year. Very interestingly 100



joined during the Marxism 2016 Festival, just after the vote to leave the EU. It shows the importance of ideas that explain the world combined with a clear strategy of how to change it. And it shows it is possible to recruit people.

We have to try and replicate the spirit of Marxism every week in our branches. Although we should strive to build each branch meeting as big as possible it is probably not going to compete with Marxism in terms of size. But it can match the politics. It can have a sharp political introduction followed by interesting discussion. The second part can be an organisation hub for the area.

If Corbyn is creating an interest in socialism then people need to know where they can find the socialists locally.

That means having flag ship sales of Socialist Worker in every town, it means advertising our branch meetings to a much wider audience. It means having interesting branch meeting titles. The districts that have recruited this year – and it is very uneven – do so because they are conscious about it – they ask people, they have a periphery of wider activists that they engage with, sell SW with, work alongside, bring to big events like Marxism or our rallies.

Even when we recruit people to our organization we have a big challenge. How do hold them in the party? How do we develop a new cadre? We need to be relevant through activity but also offer ideas.

People will stay in our party if they feel they are making a difference in the world and if they feel they have a clearer understanding of it. It is an exciting combination and one we in the SWP can offer. But it is not automatic.

Much time, thought and effort needs to be put in to both recruitment and what happens to new members. The educational programme, recently relaunched about the Labour Party and open to all members – long standing and new – is an important part of it. So is the young members' caucus that has been developed in London. Including newer members in the life of the branch is vital.

## Conclusion

The crucial battles in society are resolved in the workplace and the street, not at the ballot box.

The rise of Corbyn is a challenge but also an opportunity—and one that we should welcome. The audience for socialist ideas has grown. We need to grab the opportunity to work with those influenced with Corbyn, win them to common struggles alongside the party, particularly in the Stand up to Racism movement, and in the fight against austerity.

We must also seek to win some of those involved in the new movement to revolutionary ideas if the SWP is to grow in the period ahead

## Crucial focuses in the coming months include:

- October: follow-up rallies across Britain in Black History Month to build on SUTR conference
- November: SUTR activities during Islamophobia awareness month
- 12 November: Unite the Resistance conference
- 19 November: UCU/NUS demonstration for education
- 10 December: Winter Aid to Calais
- 6-10 July 2017: Marxism 2017

*As well as the documents in this PCB, the Central Committee will produce specific documents on Building the Party, Politics in the Workplace, Students, LGBT+ work, Issues around Oppression, Climate change, fracking and the environment, Socialist Review, Imperialism, International Socialism, Education, and Finance.*

## RACISM AND FASCISM

### Central Committee

The 1,600 strong Stand Up To Racism conference on Saturday 8 October showed the potential to build a mass movement against racism in Britain.

Such a movement is sorely needed. The Tories under Theresa May are putting immigration and the ending of the free movement of labour at the centre of their political project, championing a “hard Brexit” in order to keep migrants out.

Tory home secretary Amber Rudd may have backed down on plans to force companies to list publicly the “foreign nationals” they employ, but the future of tens of thousands of EU workers still hangs in the balance.

With just days to go until the planned destruction of the jungle refugee camp in Calais the Tories have been callously dragging their feet over enacting the Dubs Amendment to the Immigration Act. It seems refugee children, just like EU nationals, are being used as a political football, firstly in a game of brinkmanship with the Hollande government and secondly as part of the Brexit negotiations with the EU.

Against such a background it is no surprise that we've seen a spike in racist incidents since the referendum, for example the attack on a Muslim woman in Tottenham, north London, who had her hijab ripped from her head by two men.

The Stand Up To Racism conference, addressed by Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, shadow home secretary Diane Abbott, Lord Alf Dubs, UCU's Sally Hunt, NUS president Malia Bouattia, Gloria Mills of the

TUC and Salma Yaqoob, among others, laid out a programme of action for the next few months.

That programme culminates with a TUC-backed demonstration on 18 March 2017, UN anti-racist day, and just days before the deadline Theresa May set herself for triggering article 50.

Stand Up To Racism is a crucial project for the whole movement. The task is to turn the potential for the creation of a mass movement into reality.

## Freedom of movement and migrant workers

The EU referendum debate was dominated by the issues of the free movement of labour, immigration and the refugee crisis.

Politicians on both sides of the official Leave and Remain campaigns peddled the same old lies about the effects of immigration, undermining British workers' wages and overburdening the welfare state.

This was true of David Cameron and Theresa May as well as Michael Gove, Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage, though UKIP's infamous anti-refugee billboard took things to new depths. The general level of racist rhetoric was so appalling that it helped to inspire the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox by someone who claimed to be defending Britain against “traitors”.

Some workers can fall for the media and politicians' lies and see migrants and refugees as the enemy. That's what Amber Rudd was attempting to both stir up and relate to when she talked about migrants “taking jobs British people could do”.

Theresa May has now taken her place on the international stage arguing for a halt to free movement of workers. It has been really positive to have Jeremy Corbyn publicly combating these reactionary ideas. His stance can give confidence to activists to argue against divide and rule in their workplaces, colleges and communities.

We've argued that the vote to leave the EU can't simply be explained by racism. Some workers voted Leave because they held reactionary ideas. Many others did so as a way of sticking two fingers up at the establishment. For some, of course, it was an unstable combination of both elements.

Some key figures on the left who campaigned hard for Remain, such as the FBU's Matt Wrack, have since highlighted the element of working class anti-austerity rebellion in the Brexit vote, rather than simply seeing Leave voters as a reactionary mass as some have done.

But that hasn't stopped others on the left asking whether the referendum result means that Labour has to “re-examine its position” on free movement of Labour – that is, cave in to racist arguments.

British workers have shown massive levels of sympathy and solidarity with refugees. Thousands of trade unionists and campaigners have gone to the Calais and

Dunkirk refugee camps, tens of thousands have collected money, clothes and food for refugees and joined protests in their defence. Millions of people in the UK have contributed to solidarity collections for refugees or donated materials.

But that support and solidarity doesn't mean that the myths about migrants undermining wages and overburdening services don't have a real purchase.

The victory by Unite at the Fawley oil refinery, where the threat of strikes won Bulgarian and Italian workers a 160 percent pay rise and parity with British workers on £125 a day, is a brilliant example of what can be achieved when workers stand together and unions give a lead.

Other key struggles involving unorganised mainly migrant workers at Uber, Deliveroo and by cleaners and hotel and catering workers are also important examples that show migrants as part of the solution not part of the problem.

But we only need to look at the recent involvement by French CGT union members in the blockade of the Calais jungle to see what could happen here if the cancer of racism is successfully used to divide us.

Socialists must be at the centre of defending the free movement of labour.

Stand Up To Racism and the TUC have called a day of action in defence of EU workers on Wednesday 19 October and there are other important initiatives such as the Campaign to Defend Freedom of Movement meeting in London on 22 October that we want to help succeed.

## Islamophobia

Anti-racists are also operating against a background of mounting Islamophobia, with the "threat" of ISIS and "radicalisation" used to justify the targeting of the Muslim community by Prevent and other initiatives.

In the wake of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and more recent conflicts in Libya and Syria the Muslim population has been scapegoated as an "enemy within" by both the government and the media. Developments in Europe, France's "Burkini ban" being a particularly horrific example, have only increased the pressure on the Muslim community here.

The annual survey by the Islamophobia monitoring group Tell MAMA found a 326 percent rise in anti-Muslim incidents in 2015, with women in particular being targeted.

The Prevent agenda remains one of the most insidious means used by the government to both demonise Muslim communities and divide the working class.

Placed on a statutory footing in the 2015 Counter Terrorism and Security Act, Prevent is not new. It has been part of New Labour, the coalition and now Tory governments' failed Contest strategy for over a decade and is based upon a reactionary and flawed "conveyor belt" theory of Muslim radicalisation.

Prevent seeks to pit public sector work-

ers against Muslims by requiring them to spy and report upon those supposedly at risk of radicalisation. Muslim organisations such as Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), the Muslim Council of Britain and Islamic Human Rights Commission report that Prevent has stirred up Islamophobia, racist attacks and is silencing Muslim communities.

The teaching unions, NUS, Muslim organisations, MPs, including the then shadow home secretary Andy Burnham, human rights groups such as Liberty and even the government's own independent reviewer of Terrorism legislation David Anderson QC, have all condemned Prevent.

The government is now introducing further legislation outlawing "extremism". These proposals represent a further, serious attack upon hard won rights.

There is an urgent need to stand in solidarity with Muslim communities. NUS has organised a number of activities on university campuses.

But the best way to combat Islamophobia is to integrate this work into the wider anti-racist agenda. Stand Up To Racism did this very successfully earlier in the year by having speakers on Prevent at its rallies. Staff at Edinburgh College forced management to retreat on the implementation of Prevent in training programmes. LGBT+ activists have also shown the way by setting up a campaign against Islamophobia.

Both the NUT and UCU have passed policy at their conferences against Prevent. In the coming year activists will have to find ways to turn this paper policy into practice.

## Institutional racism and Black Lives Matter

Institutional racism is a major factor in the lives of millions of people in Britain. The effects of institutional racism means for example that the unemployment rate for black and minority ethnic 16-24 year olds has risen by 50 percent since the Tory led coalition came to power in 2010.

Young black people are still victims of state racism and violence. Black people are four times more likely than whites to face "stop and search" at the hands of the police. And of course black people can still face death at the hands of the police, recent examples being Dalian Atkinson, the footballer who died of a heart attack after being tasered in August, and Mzee Mohammed who died after being detained by police in Liverpool in July.

It is in this context that we have seen the growth of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement in the UK, with a wave of protests over the summer. Activists were inspired by the movement in the US, but it was the experience of racism here on the streets and at the hands of the authorities which provided the basis for BLM in the UK.

The demonstrations were mostly organ-

ised by new activists; they were vibrant, young and included thousands of black and white people.

The protesters came from different political backgrounds and debated a myriad of political ideas, but many were receptive to socialist explanations of the roots of racism and the need for black and white unity.

This is the kind of movement which can go quiet for a while and then suddenly explode again when events trigger it. We must be ready to relate to these explosions when they occur, while in the meantime attempting to pull activists into wider anti-racist activity.

## Challenging the far right and the fascists

Stirring up opposition to refugees and migrants has been central to the agenda of the right wing media and the Tories, and this will only increase. But the UK Independence Party has also played its part. It is important to remember that they received 12.6 percent of the vote at the last general election, coming third, and while only winning one MP they received some 3.9 million votes.

UKIP are still winning council by-elections, most recently in Hartlepool against Labour. Despite their present malaise (punch-ups and leadership resignations included), UKIP can't simply be written off as a force, especially with May's government facing an uncertain post-Brexit future with a very small parliamentary majority.

The far right in Britain is at present not in a position to benefit on a large scale from the rise in the levels of racism.

This has much to do with the role that Unite Against Fascism (UAF) played in marginalising and demoralising the Nazi British National Party (BNP) and halting the development of street movements like the English Defence League (EDL).

Britain's fascists have fragmented into several small groups, including Britain First, the BNP, the National Front, the Infidels and the EDL. No group has hegemony.

The fascists may be small in number but they are still dangerous. It's always important to organise the broadest possible mobilisations against them when they attempt to march or meet.

UAF has been at the centre of significant anti-Nazi mobilisations in Edinburgh, Southampton, Coventry and elsewhere in recent months.

Events such as the UAF trip to the Nazi's Auschwitz death camp in November are important tools in educating a new generation about the horrors of fascism and in underlining the movement's forceful opposition to anti-Semitism and racism in all its forms.

The Nazis gain confidence from the prominence of their more successful cousins in France, Austria, Greece and elsewhere. The Front National is poised

for possible success in upcoming French presidential elections, as are the Austrian Nazis, the FPÖ.

These Euro Nazis give hope to our home grown fascists that they will end up in the big league themselves. That's why it is still crucial to build UAF and to mobilise whenever the Nazis take to the streets.

## Stand Up To Racism

The whole movement urgently needs to make a step change, to raise our expectations about the possibility of developing Stand Up To Racism as a mass anti-racist movement.

Stand Up To Racism has had real successes so far. The 8 October event was the biggest anti-racist conference for a long time.

Over the past three years Stand Up To Racism has successfully put a mass mobilisation against racism into the diary of the whole labour movement – UN anti-racism day (in March each year).

The TUC's support for next year's demo means there is potential to mobilise a massive turnout, at a time when the debate over freedom of movement and Brexit is likely to be reaching a peak.

SUTR has successfully responded to the refugee crisis, delivering material aid and political solidarity from the very start, organising major delegations to Calais in September and October 2015, co-organising the Convoy to Calais with the People's Assembly in June 2016, and initiating the activity of many local groups.

SUTR has also been at the heart of responding to the wave of racist attacks post EU referendum through organising local protests and vigils in Harlow, Milton Keynes, Tower Hamlets, Leeds, Tottenham and elsewhere.

It mobilised against the "Burkini ban", calling demos at the French embassy in London and at consulates across the country.

The organisation has received support from the TUC, from big affiliated unions like Unite and Unison and from the NUS.

The call for a Stand Up To Racism trade union conference in February gives the organisation the chance to build roots at all levels of the movement, from the support of general secretaries to building groups in individual workplaces and trade union branches.

There is clearly the opportunity to unite Labour supporters, the unions, students unions, community campaigns and faith groups into a powerful national movement to undermine the rise of racist ideas and racist violence.

The SWP is proud of its involvement in Stand Up To Racism. But the success of the organisation rests on the involvement of forces far, far bigger than the SWP. That has been the case with other key united front campaigns in the recent past. The SWP played an important role in the development of the Anti Nazi League (ANL),

Unite Against Fascism and the Stop the War Coalition, but once again their success depended on the involvement of far wider layers of organisations and individuals.

These campaigns mobilised people on a massive scale and made a huge impact on what Britain looks like today.

The beating back of the National Front and the BNP was an historic achievement. The Stop the War Coalition organised the biggest demonstration in British history on 15 February 2003 and its legacy has made British military intervention abroad difficult for even the most bullish government.

These movements also left a huge cultural legacy, from Rock Against Racism to the poster artwork of the ANL (the red arrow) and David Gentleman's blood spot placards for Stop the War.

Today's anti-racists need to create that kind of movement now, so that in every workplace, trade union branch, college campus and local community anti-racist arguments are being put, popularised and are winning hegemony.

Every time you get on a bus or a train there should be people wearing Stand Up To Racism badges and stickers (just like at the height of the ANL and Stop the War).

Anti-racists need to create a campaign that pumps out literature exposing the myths about immigration and that responds to every government assault on refugees and migrants, every Islamophobic front page or attack on a mosque; a movement that responds to police shootings, that works with Black Lives Matter activists and opposes every racist attack.

That means developing a movement that belongs to all those involved, whether they are established activists or new campaigners and whatever their political backgrounds. For example, on the cultural front Love Music Hate Racism needs to reach out across society and involve a broad, young audience.

The united front tactic has always been about attempting to unite revolutionaries with all or part of mass reformist organisations around common struggle over key issues.

The united front is not a trick carried out by revolutionaries – our class needs those inside and outside Labour to unite around key issues to combat Tory attacks, whether that's in support of the junior doctors' strikes, opposition to grammar schools or opposing racist attacks.

This unity is crucial even if we have political differences over a number of issues. The important thing is that whatever our differences we work and act together. This process of debate and discussion within a movement is a sign of its genuine breadth, it shows that it isn't a "front" for any one political group.

The Stand Up To Racism conference wasn't a talking shop. It outlined a clear perspective for the period ahead. As socialists we want to help turn this programme into reality.

## Stand Up To Racism is calling for you to:

- Organise a major Stand Up To Racism rally in every town and city.
- Win support and affiliation from union branches/student unions and campaigns
- To build Stand Up To Racism groups at work and on campus
- Buy and distribute badges for Stand Up To Racism and workers/student Stand Up To Racism groups
- Work with others for to build events in Islamophobia awareness month.
- Raise "Winter Aid" for refugees and build a delegation to Calais on 10 December.
- Build the day of action on the Dubs Amendment on 14 October.
- Build the Stand Up To Racism, TUC day of action for EU workers on 19 October
- Build the Stand Up To Racism Trade Union Conference in February
- Build locally based Stand Up To Racism steering committees to develop local initiatives and local events.
- Raise money for Stand Up To Racism – you can't build a mass campaign without finance.

## THE CHALLENGE OF RELATING TO CORBYNISM

Candy Udwin

The SWP is right to argue:

- Corbynism represents a significant and exciting shift to the left.
- The outcome of the battle between left and right in the Labour party and the wider attacks on Corbyn will ultimately be resolved by a mass movement on the streets rather than inside the Labour party.
- The united front method is how we should operate and aim to influence those who support Corbyn.

The task the party faces is to connect with the explosion of membership of the Labour Party by putting this method into practice.

## Disorientation

We have to rise to the political challenge of explaining why we believe we are correct to remain outside the Labour party without succumbing to the biggest danger we face of standing outside or abstaining from the movement supporting Corbyn.

I don't think we should underestimate the disorientation that some comrades feel of knowing we are right to not to join the Labour party but then feeling disconnected from where it can appear the real battles



and political excitement is taking place.

Part of this will be overcome by developing the political clarity and discussion within the party about the new situation we face.

But we also have to prove in practice that we can be relevant and have an influence at the same time as attracting new people to our ideas and our organisation.

## Working alongside Labour Party members

Of course it is important that we connect with Momentum and internal Labour Party meetings.

But key for us is that we work alongside Labour Party members fighting against austerity and racism both to develop these campaigns and to raise the demands that we can then put about policy and how to take the struggle forward.

We should aim to and can have an influence on the direction and outcome of the battles around Corbyn if we use the opportunity Corbynism creates and are rooted in building and leading the fightback.

So when Corbyn makes a stand refusing to call for curbs on immigration whilst other MPs go on TV calling for restrictions on the freedom of movement we can make a real difference by building a huge Stand Up To Racism movement.

Corbyn's position helps us build the movement. Building the movement strengthens his position.

## Putting demands

We can argue in concrete terms the importance of the movement outside of the Labour party with people who we are fighting alongside.

We are not just cheerleaders for Corbyn. We have criticisms of his strategy. But the demands that we put on him and the leaders of the movement can come from the heart of struggles we are jointly involved in not just from the outside.

Corbyn and John McDonnell understand the importance of action on the streets, but the pressure on them will always be towards the logic of internal Labour party battles and elections and this limits their calls for action.

We can help keep them pulled in the direction of the movement by the campaigns we build and the demands that we put.

## Fighting back against austerity

Corbyn's policies and the shift to the left around his leadership allow the possibility of building bigger movements of resistance.

This is not inevitable and the level of class struggle has continued to be low.

But the problems for the post-Brexit Tory government and the general political struggle around Corbyn could both help develop a fightback.

For example, building Council Housing has been put back onto the agenda. Fighting for £10 an hour can become a winnable demand. Opposition to grammar schools can help fuel the campaign to defend education.

The same is true on every front. Corbyn's backing for library campaigns and opposition to privatisation of museums and galleries gave confidence to campaigners to call for a national demonstration on 5 November that is now backed by Unison nationally as well as Unite and PCS.

We need to develop the method of using Corbyn's policies to fan the flames of resistance where we can.

## A method – not a shopping list

This is a political method that we need to develop rather than a shopping list for comrades of campaigns they should be involved in

We have a particular responsibility to prioritise the fight against racism, both because we have to respond to the rise in racism and because we are well placed to make a real difference. Every branch and every comrade should be involved in this in whatever way they can.

But this has to go hand in hand with our campaigning against austerity.

Of course as a small organisation we have to prioritise and we can't do everything. But every branch should discuss where they and individual comrades fit in and help develop the strategy of where we can intervene.

Sometimes, for example in the case of the junior doctors and the NHS, we will not be strong enough to organise the action we need.

But we could all be involved in a campaign around a demand on Corbyn and the leaders of the unions to call such action such as a national demonstration over the NHS.

## Opportunities pose challenges

The new situation means we have significant opportunities both for the party and the left as a whole in the coming period.

But that means we need a higher level of discussion at every level of the party about what demands we should be putting; where we should be intervening; and assessing whether we are connecting with the new political mood correctly. The challenge is an exciting one!

# SOCIALIST WORKER, THE WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

## Central Committee

Socialist Worker is a crucial part of how we relate to the people enthused by Jeremy Corbyn. We meet his supporters at work, at university, in campaigns at meetings of Momentum and the Labour Party. If they read the paper they will see we always back Corbyn against the right but also insist on the primacy of battles outside parliament.

The paper is also an important method of building strong links with Stand Up To Racism activists. We give unparalleled coverage to anti-racist issues but we also carry in-depth reporting of the Corbyn debates, the junior doctors' dispute, the climate change movement, international issues and so on.

There is much to discuss about how we raise the sale of Socialist Worker. But this contribution looks at the paper itself and our website and social media presence.

## SW has responded to the Corbyn phenomenon with:

- Detailed coverage of the pro-Corbyn meetings, rallies etc and reflection of the ideas of those who attend
- Seeking to be the bitterest critics of the Labour and trade union right who want Corbyn out.
- Looking at the international experience of new reformist projects, such as Syriza.
- Theoretical and historical articles such as the "Socialists and Labour" series or the page 14-15 article on Attlee.
- Perspective pieces such as the "Letter to a Corbyn supporter".

These five elements are not separated off from each other. Frequently an article will touch on two or more of them. SW's attitude is always to back Corbyn against the right but then to raise the obstacles he faces and say what we can do about them. A good example is the centre pages on "Can Jeremy Corbyn's plans work?" where we favourably compare Corbyn's plans to New Labour and Owen Smith's but then look at their limitations.

We will continue to follow this method. It is not always easy but, just as everywhere else in the party, we have to avoid the pitfalls of sectarian aloofness and simple adulation.

This is the central issue that SW has faced, but it is not the only one. The paper cannot hope to compete in instant news coverage but it is the only publication that covers every strike in Britain, allows the activists to speak, is not a mouthpiece for the union bureaucracy and covers everything from the Bernie Sanders cam-



paign in the US to fracking in Lancashire to anti-racist work in Greece to the Durham teaching assistants' struggle.

The printed paper remains the centre of what we do. It acts as an organiser and agitator and enables us to represent a combined view of the world across different subjects, to mix news and analysis and comment and to bring together theory, history and today's battles in a unified product. It sifts through the thousands of possible priorities to direct the reader towards the key tasks.

But the internet has transformed news, analysis and political debate. Revolutionaries should embrace the possibilities it has opened up.

It has made available a myriad or sources to people for free across large parts of the globe. If you can get online, you can pick and choose. But much of what you read will be state or corporate propaganda, some will be conscious lies, some from left-wingers will be well-meaning but false, some will be grossly over-hyped to get the clicks that drive the journalist's income.

Socialist Worker has bias—towards the working class and the oppressed—but is rigorous about telling it like it is and not exaggerating or fawning.

The internet is particularly important for younger people. Social media has overtaken television as young people's main source of news, according to a recent report. Of the 18-to-24-year-olds surveyed in Britain, 28 percent cited social media as their main news source, compared with 24 percent for TV.

And across all age groups those who do read newspapers do not mostly do so in printed form. Most readers of the Daily Mirror, the Telegraph, The Express and the Guardian access stories on a mobile device only.

For the mainstream press the fear is that they cannot make money from this process. Newspaper readership is falling and it's hard to get enough adverts for websites.

Under 10 percent of readers in English-speaking countries have paid anything for online news in the past year. The loss-making Guardian is reduced to begging its readers to be "members". Mail Online, which claims to be the world's most visited English-language website, loses money.

This does not mean we cannot sell a revolutionary paper. It has a different role to the mainstream press and is sold in a different way. But broader media developments underline why we put stress on the web and social media. They are key mechanisms to spread our politics, find new readers of the print paper and to recruit to the party.

We now regularly put up two or more stories a day on our website and have an alerts and social media operation.

The appendix below shows some of our

stories and their readership. The figures don't tell you everything. The story on the leak of the concessions the government was preparing over the Trade Union Act was one of our most widely noticed ever. It is the only story of ours to have achieved a Google "frequently cited" tag, was mentioned in the House of Commons, picked up by scores of newspapers and we were thanked by the TUC for it. It was also true, and proved to be correct.

But only a few thousand people read it directly on our site. Of course the publicity is still very welcome and can help to drive more visits to our website and sales of the print paper.

We have introduced the "photo gallery" feature on the website and are doing more video. These features can be extended and developed. Pictures and short videos from demos and meetings are very popular on the internet. Comrades can work with the journalists around this.

Over 15,300 people now "like" Socialist Worker on Facebook. This is a rise of a third since the start of the year.

This is an important figure. Whenever we post a story on Facebook it can appear in the news feed of everyone who has liked our page (depending on how the Facebook algorithm rates their preferences). Those people may like it, comment on it, or share it with their friends.

That's why we urge all comrades and supporters to like our page, like and share our articles. We have produced cards with all the details of our social media output and comrades can obtain them from the National Office for stalls etc.

But we shouldn't get carried away by the power of Facebook. The fact that a story appears on someone's news feed doesn't guarantee they will see it, let alone read it, let alone read more than the first few sentences.

Our most successful Facebook post (in terms of immediate impact) was a (real) picture of the young queen Elizabeth giving a Nazi salute. Posted on the day of her 90th birthday, and amid general fawning, it reached half a million people.

We have over 28,000 followers on Twitter. Again, it's a way of distributing our articles. Comrades who have a Twitter account should follow us and retweet our articles.

We have launched a Whatsapp service as another way of alerting people when a new article goes up. We use this sparingly (not more than once a day) because people don't want to be bothered too often. Because it involves downloading the Whatsapp app and then signing up there only a few hundred people on it. We'd like every comrade with a smartphone to use this service.

You can also sign up to email alerts on the SW website.

We think these developments are important and we will follow up with more. This is not the end of the process.

## Appendix

**Top twenty articles from SWP conference 2015 to 29 September 2016.**

**Unique page views:**

- 1 Huge strikes shut France down—and could bring government to its knees: 38,066
- 2 How Asda is making workers pay the price of a failing firm: 22,091
- 3 Unofficial strike on the North Sea rigs: send solidarity: 11,189
- 4 Six myths about the EU: 9,028
- 5 After EU vote and Cameron goes: unite to shape revolt against establishment: 8,123
- 6 An anti-racist, anti-austerity and socialist case to vote Leave: 6,465
- 7 Launch of united left campaign to leave the EU: 5,484
- 8 London bus strike rattles bullying boss: 5,459
- 9 Which current MPs voted for the Iraq War?: 5,456
- 10 EXCLUSIVE - Prepare for new Labour leadership race, warns key Corbyn ally: 5,172
- 11 Inside the 'Moderates' meetup': Vows to keep fighting to oust Corbyn: 4,949
- 12 Anti-war newspaper is blocked from reporting as Chilcot report on Iraq is published: 4,831
- 13 The only way is Essex? White flight myths and the East End: 4,535
- 14 Construction workers at Rosyth aircraft carrier site on unofficial strike: 4,503
- 15 Why the Labour right love to twist the truth about Trotsky: 4,063
- 16 Livingstone, Labour and the fight against racism: 4,004
- 17 Britain's crimes in India - the truth behind the drama: 3,881
- 18 Surface tension—the battle against the North Sea oil bosses: 3,599
- 19 EXCLUSIVE: leaked minister's letter shows Tory panic over Trade Union Bill: 3,509
- 20 Fight to exit left after vote on EU is called: 3,461

## Figures comparing

**11/01/16 – 29/09/2016 to**

**11 January – 29 September 2015**

- Unique page views up by 40 percent to 1,205,509 or about 32,500 a week since conference. The average time spent on a page is 2 mins 1 sec.
- Traffic from social media is up by 135 percent, overwhelmingly Facebook and Twitter.
- Traffic from Google searches is up by a third, an indication of Google ranking our site higher up.

# THE LIMITS OF REFORMISM

Central Committee

The rise of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party and his triumphant re-election this autumn put the question of reformism and reformist organisation on the agenda for every socialist in Britain.

The transformation of Labour into a mass organisation of over half a million, led by an avowed socialist, is part of a pattern evident across much of continental Europe and beyond. In most countries the trend over the past three and a half decades has been for social democratic parties to shift to the right and for their leaderships to wholeheartedly embrace neoliberalism. New Labour under Tony Blair was the epitome of this trend.

As social democracy was hollowed out, there emerged, gradually at first and then accelerating after the economic meltdown of 2007-8, a crisis of what Tariq Ali has dubbed the “extreme centre”.

Growing discontent with the convergence of parties on the centre ground has led to the emergence of radical right and radical left alternatives.

The challenge posed by the former is discussed in another document in this bulletin. Important examples of the latter include Syriza in Greece, Podemos and Izquierda Unida in the Spanish state, the Left Bloc in Portugal and Die Linke in Germany—but there are many others.

The precise form taken depends on the political history of the country in question. Some have emerged from the Communist movement, or its Maoist variant, others from breaks with social democracy, still others are more original innovations drawing on different radical left traditions.

In Britain the radical left alternative to Labourism has, paradoxically, emerged within the Labour Party itself.

This is a result of the fact that the Labour Party has not suffered any substantial, organised split to its left, a punishing electoral system that tends to limit the space for radical alternatives, and the failure of the various left alternatives constructed since the early 2000s.

The way that left reformism has broken through in Britain imposes particular problems, notably the open warfare between the left and right of the party that has raged since Corbyn's election as leader. Nonetheless, it is helpful to situate the rise of Corbyn in this broader international context.

## The basis of reformism

The critique of reformism on the revolutionary left is a longstanding one, going back, at the least, to the polemic by Rosa Luxemburg against Eduard Bernstein's “revisionist” current in the German Social

Democratic Party around 1900.

However, the extraordinary revival of left reformism has led many to assert in recent years that the traditional basis of disagreement between reformists and revolutionaries no longer holds. “Strategically non-delimited formations”, to use the jargon of the early 2000s, were said to have overcome this historic divide.

Parties such as Syriza had, it was claimed, transcended such outmoded distinctions, though proponents of this view had much less to say on the subject once Alexis Tsipras's government capitulated to the Troika and agreed to impose continued austerity. Uncritical Syriza supporters outside Greece simply moved on to the next project, often arguing that Podemos in the Spanish state was now the new model.

Podemos, which is now in an alliance with Izquierda Unida, has itself run into problems—losing a million votes between recent elections. Its leader Pablo Iglesias is at odds with its policy chief Inigo Errejón.

While Iglesias pitched for the middle ground during the election, probably alienating some of Podemos's early radical support, Errejón has gone further, seeking to position the party for a potential coalition with the moderate Socialist Party.

This illustrates a general rule: the more such parties approach power, and even now Podemos polls at about 20 percent, the more they suffer the kinds of tensions and pressures typically experienced by classical reformist parties.

The SWP has always rejected the idea that reformism was finished as an ideology or that the old division between reform and revolution was irrelevant.

We argued that while it was sometimes, though not always, tactically necessary to participate in broader left reformist formations, the strategic division between reform and revolution still holds.

It remains necessary to find ways of drawing large numbers of workers into the orbit of revolutionary socialists, while simultaneously trying to win them away from reformism in an attempt to construct a mass revolutionary party.

So, long before the rise of Corbyn or Syriza or Podemos, back in 2003, Chris Harman wrote: “There is a strange idea going round much of the far left internationally. It is that because capitalism can no longer afford reforms that improve the life of the mass of people, reformism as a powerful ideology within the workers' movement is dead.”

In fact, as Harman went on to argue, reformist consciousness continues to hold sway among workers under capitalism—indeed it can do so even in the absence of mass reformist organisations.

This is because it reflects the common sense absorbed by workers under capitalism.

For such workers, who have known no other form of society, who are subject to the domination of capitalist forces over which

they appear to have no real control, acceptance of the system in its current, apparently natural, form is hardly surprising.

Yet workers often reject aspects of the system as well, based on their own experience of struggle or those communicated to them from friends, co-workers or family members.

This contradictory amalgam of ideas, dubbed “contradictory consciousness” by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, means that most attempts by workers to fight back begin with calls to “reform” the system.

Even in revolutionary situations, workers do not flip overnight from reformist to revolutionary ideas. Uprisings from the Russian Revolution of 1905 through to the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 have begun with demands for reform.

As Leon Trotsky put it in his history of the 1917 revolution, workers move towards revolutionary ideas through a process of “successive approximation”, as reformist channels are exhausted and revolutionaries are able to intervene to win the mass of workers to their ranks.

## Reformist organisation

Reformism does not simply exist as a form of consciousness. As capitalism develops reformism begins to take organisational form, especially in periods in which the system is able to concede some of the demands made by workers.

There are, first of all, trade unions. Union organisation can be very radical indeed, as was the case with the early Russian unions around 1905 or the Bolivian union confederation born in the 1952 revolution.

However, in conditions of relative stability unions tend to develop an entrenched bureaucracy that views its role as mediating between capital and labour to negotiate the terms of capitalist exploitation.

Along with trade unions there are social democratic parties such as the British Labour Party. These are, as Lenin said of Labour, “capitalist workers' parties”: despite being based on the working class they aim to manage capitalism, a system built on the exploitation of workers.

The very fact that there is an organisational division between reformist political parties and trade unions, between politics and economics, weakens the workers' movement. It denies workers the opportunity to bring to bear their economic strength on politics and accepts that the kind of democracy offered by the parliamentary system should be confined to the political sphere. There are three further limitations to reformism.

First, rather than seeing capitalism as based on an inherent antagonism between rival classes—capitalists and workers—reformism argues that these opposed interests can be reconciled.

It seeks to reform capitalism based on

a shared “national interest” without fundamentally altering class relations. Even shadow chancellor John McDonnell, in a Labour Party conference speech in which he talked about the need for socialism, repeatedly argued that his policies were “good for business” too.

Because reformism accepts the capitalist basis of society it is limited by what capitalism will tolerate. It is no coincidence that what is often seen as a golden age for reformism, from the late 1940s through to the early 1960s, was also a golden age of capitalism built on extraordinarily high and sustained profitability across much of the system.

Even at the high point of Labourism, the post-war government of Clement Atlee, the limitations were apparent. The Atlee administration expanded welfare provision and engaged in some nationalisation but argued its case in terms of the national interest and left intact the overwhelming bulk of capitalist enterprises. When an economic crisis emerged in 1947 it reacted by curbing wages, breaking strikes, raising taxes and driving through cuts.

This formed a pattern for subsequent Labour governments, which have each been—whether grudgingly or gleefully—bent to the purpose of defending capitalist interests. Harold Wilson and James Callaghan’s governments faced enormous pressure from capitalists who could simply take their money abroad, sparking a succession of currency crises, and from institutions such as the Bank of England, whose governor famously instructed Wilson to make “immediate cuts in government expenditure” after Labour won the election in 1964 election.

The same logic has played out in even more dramatic form in Greece in recent years. For all the talk of Syriza breaking with the logic of reformism, Tsipras’s government faced precisely the same kind of pressure, albeit mediated through the structures of the European Union.

A radical reforming government was forced into line by pressure from Greek and European capitalists and financiers, and by the European Central Bank which simply cut off the supply of Euros to the Greek banking system.

There was an alternative open to Tsipras. It would have meant breaking with the Eurozone, introducing a new currency, and nationalising the banks in order to control the financial system.

This would have almost certainly precipitated a break with the EU, anathema to the domestic capitalist class who have long seen Greece’s role as a hub for European capitalism in the Balkans.

It would have meant, in the disruption and sabotage from capitalists certain to follow such a break, encouraging the mass movement to start to take control of aspects of the economic system in order to ensure such basic things as the supply of food and other necessities to the population. In short,

it would have involved a programme with elements of workers’ power.

This option was never truly considered by the leadership of Syriza—though such measures were advocated by the revolutionary left.

How would a similar scenario play out in Britain? Consider the most favourable conditions for Corbyn, in which he was able to marginalise the right wing of the party and win a future general election with a large enough vote to form a majority government.

The incoming Labour government, though coming to power in a country with greater room for manoeuvre than Greece in 2015, would face concerted efforts by British and international capitalists to block any serious programme of reforms.

Wresting these reforms from capitalism would require more than a left-wing government. It would mean mass struggle from below, operating according to a quite different logic, not constrained by what the system and its rulers will tolerate.

The second limitation of reformism is that it orientates on the capitalist state, attempting to take hold of it and wield it in an effort to win reforms. This assumes that the state is simply a neutral tool that can be taken up and used by parties such as Labour.

However, the state is an inherently capitalist institution, permeated by a capitalist logic and capitalist interests. Even in a parliamentary democracy such as Britain the bulk of the state consists of unelected institutions, including the police, army, judiciary and civil service.

While these are often run at the lowest level by workers, those who reach the top of these institutions are typically drawn from a ruling class background and, whatever their origins, will have proven their loyalty to the ruling class during their ascent.

When the ruling class cannot tame a left government by constitutional means, it can deploy the power concentrated in the state to thwart reforms. This was demonstrated most dramatically in Chile in 1973, when the reforming government of Salvador Allende was brutally toppled by Augusto Pinochet’s military coup. Again, this outcome was not inevitable. A powerful workers’ movement erupted in Chile from 1972, fighting off an earlier coup attempt in mid-1973. For a moment it seemed possible that the workers’ organs created by that movement—the cordones—might form an alternative basis for running Chilean society.

But Allende insisted that the military would obey the constitution, even bringing Pinochet into his cabinet. The ruling class was given a breathing space and the working class was demobilised and disorientated.

While a military coup in Britain is not an immediate prospect, we should not expect the state machine here to be any

more willing to allow the radical reform threatening capitalist interests.

When Corbyn was elected Labour leader, a serving senior general in the army warned of a “mutiny” if he formed a government. “The army just wouldn’t stand for it,” he said.

The third limitation of reformist parties is that they focus on the parliamentary sphere. That is not to say that the leaders of reformism see no scope at all for other activity. Tony Benn did, during the high point of Bennism in the early 1980s, talk about the need for extra-parliamentary activity, and Corbyn does so today.

However, both left and right of the party see the ultimate goal as the election of a Labour government. This can mean that important struggles, such as major strike waves or other social movements, can bypass reformist organisations altogether.

Moreover, those activists drawn into the Labour Party tend to become habituated into the cycle of electoral work, canvassing, phoning voters, delivering leaflets and so on, potentially pulling them away from other battles in the working class.

It also means that there can be a tension between principled socialist positions, which must be defended even when unpopular, and the positions thought to play well with the electorate.

A striking example is over immigration where even some of those on the left of the Labour Party, with honourable exceptions such as Corbyn and Diane Abbott, have taken an, at best, equivocal position.

Not only is electoralism an issue, but because of the clash between the aspiration of many of those drawn into reformist organisation and the role played by these parties, the focus of activists can become one of winning changes within the reformist party itself.

So, while the SWP defends the idea of right-wing Labour MPs being deselected, if the major focus of large sections of the left over the coming months is to fight for this, at the expense of mobilising against racism or against austerity, it will weaken the very movements out of which Corbynism draws its support.

## Relating to the reformist upsurge

The largely negative assessment of reformist organisation offered here does not mean that we are indifferent to the Labour Party’s shift to the left or that we are not interested in winning reforms.

We understand that those joining Labour are largely a radicalising audience to we want to relate and we certainly welcome Corbyn and McDonnell popularising the notion of socialism. Our approach to politics in the conditions created by Corbyn’s victory is discussed in the main perspectives document in this bulletin. Here we want to make some more general points.



As Luxemburg pointed out in her polemic with Bernstein, revolutionaries are the most ardent fighters for reform.

Without such a battle for reforms, workers can never acquire the confidence and organisation required to be in a position to confront capitalism. However, the successful defence of reforms involves a mass movement that can challenge the power of capital and the state. We want to draw reformist workers into these confrontations alongside revolutionaries.

What form should collaboration between reformists and revolutionaries take?

It is clear that in Britain today it will not take the form of entry into the Labour Party. Individual socialists might be able to sneak into Labour, though even that has proven hard for many, but organisations with hundreds or thousands of members cannot do so.

That is unlikely to change unless the Labour Party splits—and that in turn also seems unlikely in the near future. However much the Labour right hate Corbyn, they will be reluctant to break with the party unless they have some prospect of building an alternative electorally successful organisation.

Even were it to happen, and organised socialist groups were allowed in, it is far from automatic that revolutionaries should attempt to join such a formation.

Our comrades in Greece have been successfully building a revolutionary current outside of Syriza, in defiance of much of the common sense of the left internationally.

The record of “entryism” whereby revolutionaries enter and work within parties such as Labour is not an especially glorious one in Britain, as the curious can discover from Duncan Hallas’s 1982 article, “Revolutionaries and the Labour Party” ([www.marxists.org/archive/hallas/works/1982/revlp/](http://www.marxists.org/archive/hallas/works/1982/revlp/)).

Joint work with reformists will instead be based on the application of the united front tactic. Leon Trotsky spelt out clearly in 1922 what this meant, in the context of trying to guide the (still revolutionary) Communist Parties of Europe to engage in joint activity with social democracy in defence of workers’ conditions:

*“If the Communist Party had not broken drastically and irrevocably with the social democrats, it would not have become the party of the proletarian revolution... Whoever does not understand this, does not know the first letter of the ABC of Communism.”*

*“If the Communist Party did not seek for organisational avenues to the end that at every given moment joint, coordinated action between the Communist and the non-Communist (including social democratic) working masses were made possible, it would*

*have thereby laid bare its own incapacity to win over—on the basis of mass action—the majority of the working class. It would degenerate into a Communist propaganda society but never develop into a party for the conquest of power.*

*“It is not enough to possess the sword, one must give it an edge; it is not enough to give the sword an edge, one must know how to wield it.*

*“After separating the Communists from the reformists it is not enough to fuse the Communists together by means of organisational discipline; it is necessary that this organisation should learn how to guide all the collective activities of the proletariat in all spheres of its living struggle. This is the second letter of the alphabet of Communism.”*

Separation of the revolutionaries from the reformists is merely the starting point. Revolutionaries must seek to engage reformists in common struggles in order to win a majority in the working class.

But should the united front extend only to reformist workers, or should it include reformist leaders too? “The very posing of this question,” argued Trotsky, “is a product of misunderstanding”:

*“If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organisations, whether party or trade union, that would of course be the best thing in the world.*

*“But then the very question of the united front would not exist in its present form. The question arises from this, that certain very important sections of the working class belong to reformist organisations or support them. Their present experience is still insufficient to enable them to break with the reformist organisations and join us.”*

This is entirely true in Britain. A few thousand workers look to the kind of politics espoused by the SWP. A few million look to Corbyn. We cannot hope to bring mass struggles and mass campaigns into existence based on our own organisation alone.

We want to appeal to the leaders of reformism for united struggle. The approach to the reformist leaders poses a dilemma for them.

Moving from the parliamentary chamber to the streets and workplaces allows us to demonstrate the superiority of our methods of struggle and potentially win over their supporters. Yet if the reformist leaders refuse unity, provided it is a credible call, it would expose a lack of seriousness in defending the interests of workers.

Finally, Trotsky warns the Communists:

*“Any sort of organisational agreement which restricts our freedom of criticism and agitation is absolutely unacceptable to us.*

*“We participate in a united front but do not for a single moment become dissolved in it. We function in the united front as an independent detachment.*

*“It is precisely in the course of struggle that broad masses must learn from experience that we fight better than the others, that we see more clearly than the others, that we are more audacious and resolute.”*

In other words, the united front is also the context for a battle between reformist and revolutionary tactics and ideas in advancing the struggle.

What applying the tactic of the united front means concretely depends on the circumstances that revolutionaries find themselves in.

For much of the preceding period even our most successful united front, the Stop the War Coalition, could only draw in the most left elements of the Labour Party.

The trade unions did support the coalition, along with various other organisations such as the Muslim Association of Britain, but winning large sections of the Labour Party to the cause was simply not a viable proposition.

This is in contrast to the situation today, in which the leader of the Labour Party, who has the active support of vast numbers of members, accepted an invitation to speak at the Stand Up To Racism conference in which we play a crucial role.

In other words, any serious struggle we engage in, in whatever arena of activity, in whichever region of the country, must involve an effort to draw leading supporters of Corbyn into the fray, in order to pull large numbers of those sympathetic to Corbyn into our orbit. To neglect this would be a sectarian mistake.

At the same time, we have to understand, and be able to patiently explain to those close to us, the historical limitations of reformism and the need for a revolutionary alternative.



## PROPOSED CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The outgoing Central Committee proposes the following comrades for election to the CC at conference January 2017:

Alex Callinicos  
Amy Leather  
Brian R (East London)  
Charlie Kimber  
Joseph Choonara  
Judith O (Hackney)  
Julie Sherry  
Lewis Nielsen  
Mark Thomas  
Michael Bradley  
Sally Campbell  
Sue C (North London)  
Weyman Bennett

Some names have been shown only as an initial to protect comrades at work.

The changes from the present CC are:

- Jo C and Paul McG are stepping down due to other commitments. We thank them for their work and we are sure that the whole party is grateful to them.
- Lewis Nielsen is added. He has worked in the student department and in a number of other roles.

The SWP constitution says:

*"The outgoing Central Committee selects and circulates a provisional slate for the new CC at the beginning of the period for pre-Conference discussion. This is then discussed at the district aggregates where comrades can propose alternative slates.*

*"At the Conference the outgoing CC proposes a final slate (which may have changed as a result of the pre-Conference discussion).*

*"This slate, along with any other that is supported by a minimum of five delegates, is discussed and voted on by Conference".*

## SWP CONSTITUTION

### (1) Introduction

The Socialist Workers Party is an organisation of revolutionary socialists dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism internationally and the construction of a world socialist system.

We belong to and develop the revolutionary communist tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky. Central to this tradition is the conception of socialism from below. As Marx put it, "the working class must emancipate itself, and in so doing emancipate the whole of society". Socialism cannot be achieved by acts of parliament or any kind of dictatorship or minority action but only through the struggles of working people throughout the world.

Since capitalism is a global system, socialism can only succeed through a process of world revolution.

We are internationalists who support struggles around the world against capitalism, imperialism and oppression.

Accordingly we strive to build international forms of organisation and solidarity. The SWP participates in the International Socialist Tendency, which seeks to bring together revolutionary socialists worldwide.

The SWP is an organisation of committed fighters for socialism who believe that the working class is the only force capable of building socialism in the world.

We strive to construct a revolutionary party whose overwhelming majority are workers. We actively support all struggles against exploitation and oppression. Within those struggles we always seek to involve the widest numbers in joint activity, and to advance socialist ideas.

Democracy is at the heart of socialism and is central to the workings of the SWP. The SWP is a democratic centralist organisation that decides its policies through full discussion and debate among its members and then implements these policies in a united and disciplined way.

The conditions of the class struggle change all the time, and effective socialist intervention requires members' involvement in constant democratic review of party activity and organisation.

In order to be effective in both carrying out the party's democratic decisions and testing them in practice, we need to act in a unified way. Once decisions have been taken, all members are expected to carry out party policies.

Decisions by the Conference of the SWP are binding on all party members and bodies. Subject to the sovereignty of Conference, decisions taken by the Central Committee (CC), National Committee

(NC) and Party Council are binding on caucuses, districts and branches, and individual party members.

### (2) Membership

A member is someone who agrees with the politics of the SWP (as outlined in "Where We Stand", which is printed in each issue of *Socialist Worker*), accepts its constitution, and works within and under the direction of the appropriate party bodies.

All members are expected to pay suitable subscriptions, depending upon their means, to take and sell *Socialist Worker*, and where possible to be members of an appropriate trade union and stand for the position of shop steward or its equivalent.

Any member over three months in arrears may be excluded from membership.

### (3) Branches and districts

The basic unit of party organisation is the branch. Branches may be organised on geographical or industrial bases.

Branch members meet regularly to determine the branch's work, within the framework of national policy.

Branch members may decide in a meeting to establish some kind of responsible branch structure to direct the branch's work. Such structures can, when so empowered, make binding decisions, subject to review and possible alteration by a full members meeting or higher body. General guidance about these matters may be given from time to time by Conference, the Central Committee or the National Committee.

Where appropriate, branches may be grouped together in a district. As with a branch, district members meeting together may elect a district committee to coordinate party activity across a district.

Establishing a new branch or district, or altering boundaries between them, is subject to the agreement of the Central Committee.

### (4) Conference

National Conference is the supreme policy making body and is held annually.

Branches and/or districts elect delegates to Conference on a basis proportional to their membership, as determined by the Central Committee. Only members of the organisation may participate in the election of delegates. Only delegates may vote at Conference and participate in electing leading committees.

Three months before each Conference the Central Committee opens a special pre-conference discussion in the organisation. Members are invited to contribute written discussion documents for internal circulation during this period. During the pre-conference period, district aggregates are held where CC members present members with a review of the previous

year and an outline of party perspectives. These open meetings give all members the chance to discuss party work, raise questions and points of disagreement and collectively assess the party's development.

The Central Committee nominates a Conference Arrangements Committee of up to seven members, to be ratified or amended by a majority of delegates at the start of conference.

The CAC makes regulations and standing orders for the preparation and conduct of conference, subject to delegates agreement.

The CAC is responsible for the conduct of elections at the conference.

Members of the Central Committee, Conference Arrangements Committee, National Committee, Party Disputes Committee and full-time workers may attend Conference with speaking rights. The Central Committee may invite observers to attend conference, and these may be invited to speak.

A Special Conference may be called by the Central Committee, the National Committee (see section 6) or at the request of 20 percent of the branches. The decisions of a Special Conference are as binding as those of Annual Conference.

The procedure to call a special conference is as follows: if a branch passes a call for a special conference the branch must immediately inform the national office. The motion must include the issues that have led to the call for a conference. The national secretary must publish the motion calling for a special conference in the next issue of Party Notes.

The national secretary will also declare how many branches are required to meet the 20 percent criterion.

To call a special conference, 20 percent of branches must pass the same motion to the one originally passed, and inform the national secretary of this, within 28 days of the publication of the original motion in Party Notes.

## **(5) Central Committee**

The CC consists of members elected by the Conference according to the following procedure:

The outgoing Central Committee selects and circulates a provisional slate for the new CC at the beginning of the period for pre-Conference discussion. This is then discussed at the district aggregates where comrades can propose alternative slates.

At the Conference the outgoing CC proposes a final slate (which may have changed as a result of the pre-Conference discussion). This slate, along with any other that is supported by a minimum of five delegates, is discussed and voted on by Conference.

Between Conferences the CC is entrusted with the political leadership

of the organisation and is responsible for the national direction of all political and organisational work, subject to the decision-making powers of Conference.

The CC appoints all full-time organisers. District organisers represent and are responsible to the CC. They work together with the party members in their district to ensure the effective implementation of party policies.

## **(6) National Committee**

The National Committee consists of 50 members elected at Annual Conference.

The National Committee assists the Central Committee in providing political leadership for the party and reviews the party's political and organisational work between Conferences. Its decisions are binding on the Central Committee.

In the event of a major disagreement between the Central Committee and the National Committee, the NC has the right to call a Special Conference.

The NC normally meets every two months between Annual Conferences.

The national secretary shall normally put the date of the next NC meeting in Party Notes at least three weeks before the date of the meeting.

Branches should be able to send in motions on matters of national importance if they are passed at a properly-organised branch meeting. The NC should then decide by majority vote if it wishes to hear these motions or not. Any branch which sends in a motion should be informed whether it was heard, and if it was heard then whether it was passed.

Full-time party workers are not eligible for election to the NC. If a comrade elected to the NC subsequently become a full-time party worker, they can continue to attend but cannot vote at the NC.

## **(7) Party discipline and the Disputes Committee**

Occasionally disputes between members and breaches of normal party discipline may occur. The party has a Disputes Committee to investigate and handle these matters in a principled fashion.

The Disputes Committee's functions are to maintain and strengthen party unity and principle and to investigate complaints relating to disciplinary matters by its members or units.

The Disputes Committee consists of not more than 12 members. Conference elects up to ten of these, and the incoming CC nominates two.

The Disputes Committee is brought in where local structures prove unable to resolve disputes. Where appropriate, the Disputes Committee may arbitrate between members or party units.

Cases are normally referred to the Disputes Committee by the Central Com-

mittee. If a member has a complaint against a member of the CC or a party full-time worker, this is referred directly to the DC.

The DC has the right to refuse to pursue complaints if it deems any of the following to be the case:

1. The complaint is frivolous;
2. Based on the evidence presented, there is no case to answer;

3. The comrade concerned is trying to use the DC to win battles already lost in the democratic processes of the party.

In cases of serious breaches, disciplinary measures such as censure, suspension or expulsion may be taken by the Central Committee, or by a district or branch committee, subject to confirmation by the Central Committee.

Anyone who is disciplined and is unhappy about their treatment may appeal to the Disputes Committee, who will review the decision and can change or reverse it if they agree. The Disputes Committee may also take such disciplinary measures as it deems necessary on its own initiative.

Unless the Disputes Committee rules that exceptional circumstances prevail, comrades receive in advance a written statement of the case against them and are present when evidence is given to the DC. They receive a written statement of the DC's decision.

The DC may co-opt members to serve for particular investigations.

The DC is elected directly by SWP conference and ideally should report to conference on all cases heard. However, in some cases, in particular, because the SWP conference is annual, the DC may feel it appropriate to report earlier.

In this context the DC may consult the NC for advice or report to an SWP Party Council. Should a DC report be made to a Party Council and be accepted, the report will be considered endorsed as if the report had been made to a full Conference.

Should the DC report or a section of it *not* be endorsed by Conference or Party Council, then an appeal should be referred to the incoming Disputes Committee.

Members of the DC hearing the original complaint should not sit on the appeal. If necessary the newly elected DC could use its power of co-option to create an acceptable panel to rehear the case.

The decision of any appeal body shall override an earlier decision and this appeal body should report to the conference or Party Council in addition to the DC report. The decision of conference or Party Council on this appeal body decision shall be final and binding.

*There is a detailed set of procedures for the Disputes Committee. This is available to any member from the SWP national secretary or the Disputes Committee and can be viewed at [www.swp.org.uk/content/dc-review-dec-2013](http://www.swp.org.uk/content/dc-review-dec-2013)*

## **(8) Party Council**

The Party Council is constituted of representatives of branches decided on a numerical basis determined by the CC. It normally meets once a year. Additional meetings may be called in case of need by the CC. Every branch shall have at least one delegate.

The Party Council reviews the political and organisational work of the SWP (or such aspects of it as it deems necessary) between Conferences, pools the experiences of the members in implementing the line of the organisation and advises the CC. It has power to take decisions on matters of general policy binding on the CC.

When appropriate, the CC may call national meetings of party members to discuss any aspect of party work and organisation.

## **(9) Fractions**

All members will normally be involved in united front activities in trade unions/student unions and in campaigns. They should be guided by conference policy, the decisions of the NC and the Central Committee.

The CC shall convene fraction meetings of comrades involved in unions, united fronts and student work as appropriate—but at least once a year.

The CC may also call local or regional fraction meetings.

Each fraction will elect a national coordinator.

The CC will allocate one of its members to each fraction and campaign activity, and to activity in the student movement.

## **(10) Factions**

If a group of party members disagrees with a specific party policy, or a decision taken by a leading committee of the party, they may form a faction during a preconference period by producing a joint statement signed by at least 30 members of the party.

A faction will be given reasonable facilities to argue its point of view and distribute its documents. These must be circulated through the National Office, to ensure that all members have the chance to consider them.

Debate continues until the party at a Special or Annual Conference reaches a decision on the disputed question. Permanent or secret factions are not allowed.

## **Constitutional changes**

This Constitution (along with “Where We Stand”) was agreed by conference 2003, and amended by the special Democracy Conference of 2009, the special conference in March 2013, the annual conference in December 2013 and annual conference in December 2014. Either document may be amended by a majority of delegates at any future Conference.

# NATIONAL COMMITTEE ELECTION 2016

Every year at SWP annual conference delegates elect a National Committee of 50 members.

Its role is set out in section six of the party's constitution (which is in this bulletin). Those elected to the NC also attend Party Councils and Party Conference by right.

We call for nominations for the NC in pre-conference bulletins 1 and 2. **All nominations must be received by 5pm on Monday 5 December.**

Please do not wait to the last

minute to do this.

A full list of nominations will be published in advance. This will give delegates time to decide who they wish to elect.

Below is the nomination form. If you wish to stand, please fill it in and return it to the national office, or email the required information to [conference@swp.org.uk](mailto:conference@swp.org.uk)

Each nomination has to be supported by five comrades, and the nominee has to agree to be nominated.

Candidates have to be registered

members of the SWP and up to date with their subs (this also applies to the comrades nominating the candidate).

Each candidate should submit up to 50 words explaining why they should be on the NC. Please do not submit more than 50 words (last year the longest one submitted was 112 words – it had to be cut).

At conference, the CC, fractions, student committee and districts can submit lists of recommended candidates to conference delegates.

Nominee .....

Branch.....

Nominated by

1 .....

2 .....

3 .....

4 .....

5 .....

Please give a brief outline of why you should be on the NC (no more than 50 words)

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Please return this form to: NC nominations, PO Box 71327, London SE11 9BW.  
Or email the required information to: [conference@swp.org.uk](mailto:conference@swp.org.uk)